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WEST PALM BEACH — U.S. Rep. Allen West, a former U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, sees the coming years as a "battlefield" for the nation, both economically and security-wise, and he is worried that too many government officials are ignoring the grave risks confronting the country.

West, a Republican from Plantation who defeated Democratic incumbent Ron Klein for the Congressional District 22 seat in November, repeatedly referred to the current era as "the 21st century battlefield" in addressing the Forum Cub Friday at the Kravis Center.

He said he sees a worrisome landscape for the nation, in part, because he believes President Obama's administration is underestimating the threat of Islamic terrorism.

West told the supportive crowd that security projections he had seen dealt more with the potential problems caused by global warming than with threats from groups like al Qaeda, an approach he said is wrong-headed.

"This radical Islamist movement is one of the most dangerous threats we have ever seen," said

West, who served in Iraq and later also worked as a trainer in Afghanistan."

"Political correctness cannot be part of our national security system."

West, who recently visited the U.S. detention camp in Guantanamo, Cuba, where suspected Muslim terrorists are held prisoner, said he supports keeping it open. He said detainees there are very well treated and said concerns about violations of their civil and human rights were short-sighted and played into the hands of the enemy.

"We are creating gaps by which we are being exploited," he said of pressures to close the camp on the basis of human rights concerns.

He called radical Islamists a non-uniformed enemy that is not covered by the usual conventions of war and that can even infiltrate U.S. military forces, something he said happened with the shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009.

"This 21st century battlefield is going to require that we step out of the routine," West said in defending the continued use of Guantanamo.

As for the current unstable situation in Libya, West advised caution and especially warned against putting the U.S. military on the ground there.

"When you put a soldier on the ground in Libya, who is the enemy?" he asked. "You don't know. The last thing I want to see is our soldiers or Marines on the ground, not giving them the proper rules of engagement and they end up caught in a crossfire."

"We need to think about how to extricate Moammar Gadhafi out of that situation," he added, referring to the Libyan dictator..

As for the economy, West said large cuts in spending must be made, or the country will face a potentially disastrous situation.

If we do not turn this thing around, the economic situation here in the U.S. is a fiscal Armageddon," he said.